

and my paycheck grows according to scale,
which rimes with snail. I know how much
I'll be making ten years from now.
I don't need you to remind me.

"fame is lurking around the corner?"
Crouched maybe but not ready to spring.
I'm the exception that proves the rule
about everybody having a novel in him.
And you don't think poems like this
are going to do it for me, do you?

"someone near and dear is going to die?"
No shit. John Garfield told me that.
in Body and Soul, remember? Or can't
you handle the past, Del?

"science will conquer cancer?"
Brian Piccolo will be glad to hear that.
Stop trying to make particulars
sound like generalizations. There will
always be a lost chord, a philosopher's stone.

"man will learn to live with his fellow man?"
O, sure. Particularly when he can't get
along with a woman, his best part.

Now, now. None of your riddles.
I'm too old to marry my mother
but I do have a cute sister.

I don't pretend to be able to look
into the future but I predict,
in Drew Pearson fashion, that
tomorrow the world will produce
no surprises.

sedation

i've got to watch it. it's near vacation time and
everybody's running off at the mouth about places.
i mustn't let myself get carried away by the
sweet sounds of Pamplona, Estremadura, Milano,
or even Dubonnet. it's too easy for me to for-
get how i hate to travel. i should mount a
map on the wall with pins pointing out the high-
lights of my junketry: clapped in Cuba; mugged
in Morocco; ptomained in Turkey; shanghaied in
Buffalo; buffaloed in Shanghai. but instead
i'll have to unpack a few hates from memory:

people; two drinks per plane ride; leaving,
arriving; subtractdivideplying 1750 lira into
four dollars and a quarter; pubs closing at 11,
bars opening at 11; Berlitz, warm Schlitz;
cabs, cold, culture; luggage, tickets, antiquities;
folk songs, folks; French, Germans, Italians,
Nebraskans; flying, driving, packing, oohing,
ahing, listening, smiling, waving; cameras,
The Holyland, dysentery, people.

There. That should hold me for a while.
Just take it easy, sit back and bask in
the glow of how staying home narrows one.

Eden

Watching the Dogers bobble and bangle around
on astroturf gave me hope one dream might
yet come true: a place in the country for this
city boy who never had a sense of humus.
All I've waited for is grass that doesn't grow
and ground that needs no toiling. I was taught
to puff on weeds, not pull them.

It'll probably be a few years yet before
science replaces the rest of nature --
acrylic redwoods, I understand, are still a problem,
but half a god's little acre should be no challenge.

From a swatch book should I select, oh,
orange grass, black and white privet hedges
where a dalmatian could take a leak invisibly,
a paisley vine for the chimney?

This above all: in the garage there will
be no clipper or snipper, and "mower"
will only be a lousy pun -- dolly in now for a closeup
of the owner bragging about his synthetic thumb.

But I won't go in for the Gloria Swanson
slant line Liberace look: polka dot poplars
or crazy quilt chrysanthemums -- no sir --
I want my nest to look from the road
as real as Wisconsin with lots of green
and willows weeping sterling spanish moss --
but come up close and you'll see
it's no different than the rest of the world.

-- Charles Stetler

Long Beach, CA